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ABSTRACT

This study examines the male and female connotations associated with four emotion terms (happy, angry, excited, and safe) as determined by a feature listing and hierarchy ranking of these features. The feature listing consisted of the Ss' short list of items that "made them feel like" the particular emotion. The hierarchy refers to the Ss' ranking of the descriptive items according to their importance. The Ss consisted of 36 males and 36 females from a Vanderbilt University Introductory Psychology class. A comparison of the feature listing and the hierarchy ranking revealed that many male-female differences found in the feature listing were eliminated or diminished in the hierarchy analysis. It was concluded that a hierarchial analysis is an important step in determining the meaning of emotion terms. (Author)

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The meaning of emotion words classified by a general descriptive response compared to a value system of these descriptive responses as ranked by the subjects

Abstract

This study examines the male and female connotations associated with four emotion terms (happy, angry, excited, and safe) as determined by a feature listing and hierarchy ranking of these features. The feature listing consisted of S's short list of items that "made them feel like" the particular emotion. The hierarchy refers to the S's ranking of the descriptive items according to their importance. The Ss consisted of 36 males and 36 females from a Vanderbilt University Introductory Psychology class. A comparison of the feature listing and the hierarchy ranking revealed that many male-female differences found in the feature listing were eliminated or diminished in the hierarchy analysis. It was concluded that a hierarchial analysis is an important step in determining the meaning of emotion terms.

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The meaning of emotion words classified by a general descriptive response compared to a value system of these descriptive responses as ranked by the subjects

Purpose--To analyze the connotations associated with emotion terms as described by a feature listing and hierarchical ranking of the features.

Subjects--The Ss consisted of 36 females and 36 females in an introductory Psychology course at Vanderbilt University. The setting was the regular meeting place for the course.

Procedure--The Ss were simultaneously instructed to write down the "things that made them" happy, angry, excited, and safe, in that order. They were told to record a few specific things that came to mind, but not necessarily the first things that came to mind. Then the Ss were told to rank their components for each term in order of importance to them. Ss were asked to indicate their sex, but were told not to give their names. After the Ss had completed their lists, the papers were collected and sorted by sex. The responses were grouped together into general categories so that comparisons between male and female responses and between hierarchy and feature listing methods could be made. Feature listing refers to the S's short list of specific items associated with each emotion term and hierarchy rating refers to the ranking of these items in order of importance. Only the most important feature (item ranked #1) was used in the hierarchy analysis.

Results and Discussion

Feature	Feature Listing		Hierarchy	
	# of responses	M F	# of responses	M F
Season/weather	21	22	1	1
People	6	5	5	5
Friends	9	18	8	10
Girls	5	1 (Boys)	3	1
Girlfriend	4	5 (Boyfriend)	3	5
Success	18	15	-	-
Hobbies/Arts	10	7	4	2
Physical needs	18	7	-	-
Academic	10	9	2	-
Sports	9	-	3	-
Family	1	7	-	1
Love	6	2	2	9
Health	1	3	1	1
Sex	11	2	3	-
Letters	-	2	-	1
God	1	-	1	-
Smiles	-	34	-	4

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Angry

Feature	Feature Listing		Hierarchy	
	# of responses	M F	# of responses	M F
People	19	21	17	15
Failure/frustration	13	6	5	2
Social wrongs	23	33	4	12
Academic	14	13	6	4
Misc.	4	3	4	3

Excited

Feature	Feature Listing		Hierarchy	
	# of responses	M F	# of responses	M F
Academic	5	10	1	1
Sports	19	9	6	5
Sex	10	6	5	5
Girlfriend	12	4 (boyfriend)	5	3 (boyfriend)
Girls	3	-(boys)	3	-
Social	6	21	3	8
Success	6	2	3	1
Hobbies/art	6	3	2	1
Surprise/news	3	10	2	5
God	2	-	1	-
Love	1	1	1	1
Vacations/travel	4	8	-	-
Misc.	14	10	4	6

Safe

Feature	Feature Listing		Hierarchy	
	# of responses	M F	# of responses	M F
Family	5	24	3	14
Home	7	10	4	2
Warmth/security	4	13	-	1
People	5	-	4	-
Friends	16	15	7	4
Girlfriend	4	9 (boyfriend)	3	6
Love	3	5	2	-
Status/success	7	6	2	2
Academic	4	-	1	-
Light	4	2	2	-
Protection	7	8	-	2
Necessities	5	-	-	-
God	2	2	2	1
Misc.	9	5	3	2

Happy

The male and female connotations associated with happy are fairly similar. For both males and females, weather/season and people related categories were frequently reported as major components of happy. However the weather/seasons category almost completely dropped out in the hierarchy ranking, which seems to indicate that the weather/seasons feature

is not as essential a component of happy as it might at first have appeared to be. In the feature listing section, 18 males and 15 females listed success as an element of happy, but the success category was entirely eliminated from the hierarchy ranking, except for 2 male responses relating to academic success. Satisfaction of physical needs, such as eating, sleeping, and drinking constituted a major component of happiness for males, but not so for females. Similarly, many more males listed sex as a feature of happiness than did females. These differences were diminished by the hierarchy ranking, where only 3 males listed sex as the most important feature of happiness and none of the males ranked physical needs as the most important feature.

The components of Hobbies/art (eg. music, plays, painting, etc.) and Academic (eg. anything relating to school) were treated similarly by males and females in both the feature listing and hierarchy ranking. Sports was a uniquely male component of happiness, as listed in the feature listing, but did not appear in the hierarchy.

Angry

There were fewer subdivisions listed for angry than for happy. The distribution of components was very similar among males and females. People, or social wrongs committed by people constituted the major components of angry in the feature listing and the hierarchy. Social wrongs were classified by responses such as inconsideration, dishonesty, unfairness, and bigotry, while people related features were specified by responses such as parents, obnoxious people, snobs, other angry people, bigots, etc. The category People was ranked similarly by males and females, but the females consistently more frequently cited Social Wrongs as a major component of anger. The Academic feature was similar for males and females in both the hierarchy and feature listing.

The differences between males and females in reporting Failure/frustration as a component of anger dissappeared in the hierarchy. (The Failure/frustration category was comprised of responses such as mistakes, rejection, lack of money, etc.)

Excited

The main component of excitement for males was sports or competition. The fact that only 9 girls mentioned this category fits in with the social stereotypes of male/female orientations, but this difference is almost entirely eliminated in the hierarchy ranking. The male/female stereotype is further displayed by the difference in distribution of the Social feature (eg. parties, dates, phone calls, reunions, etc.) of excitement for males and females. Again, this difference noted in the feature listing, was diminished in the hierarchy. Similarly, the difference in emphasis on sex was lessened in the hierarchy. However, it should be noted that the success cited by the females was mainly academic achievement, while the male responses relating to success dealt with non-academic measures of success, such as fame or money. As seen in the other emotion terms, the differences in male/female distribution of components of excitement were greatly lessened or entirely eliminated by the hierarchy rankings.

Safe

The outstanding features of safe mentioned in the feature listing by females were Home, Family, and Friends. Males did not emphasize Family and Home as much as females, although Friends was a major response of the feature listing for safety. The difference in the emphasis on Family was not eliminated in the hierarchy, with 14 females compared to 3 males ranking Family as the most important feature of safety. Monetary success was mentioned fairly equally by males and females in the

feature listing and the hierarchy ranking, as was Physical Protection (eg. slow driving, locked doors, weapons, etc.). It was interesting to note that two components mentioned by males in the feature listing were not reported at all by females. These uniquely male components of safety were Academic (eg. good grades, studying a lot, etc.) and Necessities (eg., food and shelter, change of clothes while traveling, etc.). This would again fit the stereotype of a career oriented male, concerned with future effects of good grades and not interested in trivialities. But, there was not a significant difference between males and females in the hierarchy ranking of these features.

Conclusions--Inclusion of a hierarchial ranking of features seems to be an important step in deriving the meaning of emotion terms. Many items which appear on the superficial level of the feature listing are often eliminated or the emphasis on them is shifted in the hierarchy ratings. (See chart below)

Salient Differences Between Feature Listing &
Hierarchy Rankings

Feature	# of responses	Feature Listing		Hierarchy	
		M	F	M	F
Seasons/weather		21	22	1	1
Friends		9	18	8	10
Sex		11	2	3	-
Physical needs		18	7	-	-
Success		18	15	-	-
(Happy)					
Sports		19	9	6	5
Social		6	21	3	8
Academic		5	10	1	1
(Excited)					
(Angry)					
Social Wrongs		23	33	4	12
(Safe)					
Home		7	10	4	2
Warmth/security		4	13	-	1
Necessities		5	-	-	-

Also, it appears as though relationships with people are a unifying link across emotions, whether one looks at feature listings or hierarchy rankings. In all the emotion terms "people" were very important components and pervaded many categories. ^{comparing} Further analysis ^{of} the antonymicity of the emotion terms is planned.

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